

Episode: *Editorial Fellow Interview: What Makes Rural EMS in the US a Health Equity Concern?*

Guest: Molly Nguyen, MD

Host: Tim Hoff

Transcript: Cheryl Green

[Access the podcast.](#)

[bright theme music]

[00:00:04] TIM HOFF: Welcome to the Editorial Fellow Interview series from the *American Medical Association Journal of Ethics*. I'm your host, Tim Hoff. This series provides an alternative way to access the interesting and important work being done by Journal contributors each month. Joining me on this episode is Dr Molly Nguyen, a recent graduate from, and current psychiatry resident at, the University of Mississippi School of Medicine in Jackson. She's here to discuss the July 2025 issue of the Journal, co-curated with Dr Tanya Shenoy, [Rural US Emergency Medical Services](#). Dr Nguyen, thank you so much for being here. [music fades]

DR MOLLY NGUYEN: Thank you for having me here.

[00:00:41] HOFF: What's the key ethics point that readers should take from this issue?

NGUYEN: The key ethical point is that emergency medical services, especially in rural areas, are not just logistical or technical operations, but they are essential contributors to health equity. When rural EMS services are under-resourced, understaffed, and geographically isolated, patients in those communities are disproportionately at risk of worse health outcomes. And I think ethically, this means we need to reframe EMS not as an optional or peripheral service, but as a critical component of the health care system, one that deserves the same investment, infrastructure, and policy attention as hospitals or clinics.

[00:01:28] HOFF: And so, what's the most important thing for your fellow health professions students and trainees to be taking from this issue?

NGUYEN: I think it's crucial for students and trainees to understand that health equity isn't just about who has insurance or access to a hospital. It's also about whether someone in a rural town can get timely, competent emergency care when they call 911. EMS professionals are often the first point of contact for these individuals, and they play an important role in the trajectory of that patient's health. So, future health care professionals need to recognize the role EMS plays, advocate for its support, and think more broadly about what access to care truly means.

[00:02:12] HOFF: And finally, if you could add something to the conversation happening in this issue or highlight something in particular for readers, what would that be?

NGUYEN: I want to emphasize just how much dedication there is among rural EMS providers. A lot of them are volunteers, and they're doing this work out of a deep sense of responsibility to their communities. But relying on that kind of personal commitment without backing it up with solid infrastructure, training, and support makes it difficult for these volunteers, but also makes it an ethical issue. We can't just rely and build sustainable systems on goodwill alone, so I'd push even more investment in rural EMS care, not just in the equipment or technology, but in its people as well. [theme music returns]

[00:03:00] HOFF: Dr Nguyen, thank you so much for your time on the podcast, and thanks to you and Dr Shenoy for your work in bringing this issue to our readers.

NGUYEN: And thank you for having me.

HOFF: To read the full article, as well as the rest of this month's issue for free, visit our site, [journalofethics.org](http://journalofethics.org). We'll be back soon with more *Ethics Talk* from the *American Medical Association Journal of Ethics*.